

# HEALTH

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## What is Testicular Cancer?

Testicular cancer is cancer that develops in one or both testicles in men or young boys. Testicular cancer is a highly treatable and usually curable form of cancer. The testicles (also called the testes) are a part of the male reproductive system. The testicles manufacture the male hormones. The most abundant is testosterone. They also produce sperm, the male reproductive cells.

Most cases of testicular cancer can be found at an early stage. In some cases, early testicular cancers cause symptoms that lead men to seek medical attention. Unfortunately, some testicle cancers may not cause symptoms until after reaching an advanced stage, and others may cause symptoms that appear to be due to a disease other than cancer.

In about 90 percent of cases, men have a painless or an uncomfortable lump on a testicle, or they may notice testicular enlargement or swelling. Men with testicular cancer often report a sensation of heaviness or aching in the lower abdomen or scrotum. In rare cases, men with germ cell cancer notice breast tenderness or breast growth. This symptom results from the fact that certain types of germ cell tumors secrete high levels of a hormone called human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), which affects breast development. Blood tests can measure HCG levels; these tests are important in diagnosis, staging, and follow-up of some testicular cancers.

Doctors agree that examination of a man's testicle is an important part of a general physical examination. The American Cancer Society includes testicular examination in its recommendations for routine cancer-related checkups.

If you plan to perform the self-exam, the best time to do so is during or after a bath or shower, when the skin of the scrotum is relaxed. Stand in front of a mirror and hold the male reproductive organ out of the way. Examine each testicle separately. Hold the testicle between the thumbs and fingers with both hands and roll it gently between the fingers. Look and feel for any hard lumps or nodules (smooth rounded masses) or any change in the size, shape, or consistency of the testes. Contact your doctor if you detect any troublesome signs. Be aware that the testicles contain blood vessels, supporting tissues, and tubes that conduct sperm; some men may confuse these with cancer. If you have any doubts, ask your doctor.

Visit The American Cancer Society website at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) for more information.



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